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MAN WITH A GUN

Alone, a young man eats his evening meal, a chili-dog and coke, at one of the stand-up tables in a small hamburger joint across from Georgia Tech. In a few minutes he will try to teach subjects and verbs to hapless adults, most of them older than he is. He watches as four men wearing striped prison clothes file in through the front door, a uniformed guard behind them. Close to his chest the guard holds a shotgun, his bend sinister. Each prisoner's ankles are lightly chained so that the men can walk, clumsily, perhaps even work at mowing grass or picking up trash, but could never run. The guard pays for chili-dogs and cokes for himself and the others, and carries his food to the table where the young man stands. The guard's unwavering glance causes the young man to avert his eyes. One of the prisoners also brings his food to the table, but the guard says, You don't belong up here with us men. You go sit down over there. With the shotgun, he motions toward a stack of four or five cases of empty soft-drink bottles. The prisoner says nothing, shuffles over, and eases himself down on top of the empties. The guard half-smiles at the young man as if they are in full agreement.